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FM AMEMBASSY TALLINN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0965
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC

UNCLAS TALLINN 000428

COPENHAGEN FOR EST HUB
DEPT FOR EUR/NB

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SENV](#) [TNGD](#) [TSPL](#) [EN](#)

SUBJECT: HISTORIC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENT WITH ESTONIA
SIGNED

¶1. On December 11, after nine years of negotiations, Ambassador and Estonian Minister of Education and Research Tonis Lukas signed a bilateral umbrella Science and Technology Agreement. The agreement will pave the way for increased collaboration between researchers, science, educational and government institutions in the United States and Estonia.

¶2. The agreement gives priority to collaboration on environmental and biodiversity protection, marine sciences, energy, space, global stewardship, HIV/AIDS and other health issues, science and technology education, engineering, and sustainable development.

¶3. The S&T Agreement does not require ratification by the Parliament. However, the Cabinet has decided to submit the agreement for ratification for tax purposes. According to Estonian tax law, organizations working in the framework of an agreement ratified by the Parliament can apply for Value Added Tax (VAT) exemption for goods, scholarships, grants or other funding used in the context of the project. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared the bill for ratification and expects the process to move quickly.

¶4. Current science cooperation between the United States and Estonia focuses primarily on health issues and includes research projects with the National Institutes of Health, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Boston Scientific/Guidant Corporation and the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation. From 2000-03, a major research program on oil shale was carried out under the auspices of the Department of Energy. Also during the last decade the following research institutions and companies have been involved in various science cooperation projects in Estonia: Foundation of State University of New York, Dow Corning Corporation, Hormos Medical Cooperation, Pfizer Inc, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Beloit College, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, the Endangered Language Fund, CERGE-EI Foundation, Bayer Health Care.

¶5. In the future, in addition to medical research focusing on HIV/AIDS and the human genome, the GOE expects more bilateral cooperation on oil shale research and science education. According to Ule Kikkas, Science and Technology Advisor to Minister Lukas, special efforts will be made under this new agreement to promote science education in schools through the U.S.-initiated GLOBE Program (Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment). Further, the Ministry has demonstrated an interest in adopting other youth science/technology education programs that are popular in the United States, like "Camp Invention."

¶6. A slide show of the signing ceremony can be found at U.S. Embassy Tallinn website: www.usemb.ee

¶7. Post will pouch the signed original agreement (in both English and Estonian) to OES.

